Leadership in Collaborative Inquiry

By Halgan Ahmed, Robert Bertschi, Angela Contrada, Katherine Heikkila, and John Hendrickse

"Schools with high levels of Professional Community Organizational Learning and Trust have strategically significant improvements in students learning" *(Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014)*

Collaborative inquiry and collaborating learning environments are known to show "significant improvement in students learning" (Ontario Education Board, 2013-2014). Through our research and inquiry into successful collaborative cultures, leadership has stood out as a critical factor in the success of these environments. However, a question of how an educational leader can help to support this arises. The process of creating and nurturing collaborative inquiry in schools seems to be accompanied with the struggle and need for a shift in school culture. Barriers in creating collaborative inquiry environments include (but are not limited to) issues of poor school cohesion, trust and communication, weak relationships, time restrictions, cultural and historical barriers (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014).

In our exploration of collaborative inquiry and the emerging barriers we have come across, it is understood that leadership is crucial to the success of collaborative learning environments. The controlling idea of our project is the problem that arises when considering successful

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leadership; how can an education leader (team leader, teacher leader, principal) help support collaborative inquiry communities in their school? By examining the barriers to the process of collaborative inquiry and through research of best leadership practices we identify ways in which educational leaders can help to promote successful collaborative inquiry in their schools. Through reflection, we reveal further insights on how five educators, from all over the world, envision using these leadership strategies in their own school environments to better support collaborative inquiry learning environments.

The Essential Questions

Leaders face many questions when trying to create a school climate that openly embraces collaborative inquiry. We have identified some ongoing, guiding questions from Ideas into Action that we will answer as we examine our inquiry question. For the sake of collaboration, we encourage anyone reading this to email us with any feedback or opinions on the following questions:

- What does genuine collaborative learning culture look like?
- How can we move beyond structural change and bring deep cultural change?
- What necessary conditions are for establish(ing) an authentic collaborative learning culture?
- How can we build networks beyond our own individual walls to embrace and benefit from a system wide collaborative learning culture?
- How can we ensure that the work of educators coming together results not only in more knowledge by also significantly practice in classrooms?
- How can leaders help to ensure that collaborative inquiry is successfully implemented in schools?
- How do we ensure that strong, trusting relationships with others are built?
- How will I know that I am building an effective team? (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014).

These questions are the driving force behind this paper, through discussion and research, we have discovered that by examining these questions we will hopefully push the reader to have a greater understanding of the how and why leadership is so vital to success with collaborative inquiry. We look to answer these questions as we move toward understanding the role that leadership has in implementing collaborative inquiry initiatives.

Why is leadership important in collaborative inquiry and how can a educational leader help to support this in everyday practice?

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"The measure of collective efficacy is that school and district leaders have confidence that they and their peers, can together figure out how to make progress – that is, their ongoing interaction and experience with one another build the trust and knowledge that they are collectively responsible and good at their work. It is not the sum total of individual qualities that counts, but the fact that people learn from and identify with one another"
(Ontario Board of Education, 2013– 2014).

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What are challenges to implementing successful Collaborative Inquiry?

Effective school leaders create successful teams by building genuine relationships with principals, teachers and the community. This can also be challenging because building genuine relationships with stakeholders in education often takes time and effort. School leaders can take conscious steps through a variety of interactions to make a difference in student achievement. Indicators of effective teams include personal recognition and acknowledgment, alternate solutions and actions, the belief that teamwork is valued where staff understands the benefits of collaboration inquiry on student outcomes which results in staff engagement and involvement in the team process.

Why is leadership important for assisting and implementing successful collaborative inquiry communities in a school environment?

To best meet our professional needs, the collaborative team of this paper have decided to look at best practices that can best support working professionals interested in helping to implement successful collaborative inquiry models into their schools' communities *(Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014).*

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Leadership in collaborative inquiry is important because

- [It] establishes conditions where educators have permission to not know, to be imperfect, and model this through their own actions.
- [It] searches out and welcomes diverse ideas, opinions and evidence – research, articles, media, classroom data – that shape a "both/and" rather than "either/or thinking
- [It] unpacks preconceptions, including their own, by making them explicit and transparent.
- [It] builds in regularly scheduled time so collective conversations and learning are an ongoing part of the inquiry.
- As well, [it] recognizes the value of informal, just-in-time, focused learning conversations. (Capacity Building Series K-12, 2014)

What effective tools and strategies are there to help foster this change? (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014). To best meet our professional needs, the collaborative team of this paper have decided to look at best practices that can best support working professionals interested in helping to implement successful collaborative inquiry models into their schools' communities **(Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014).**

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The Senior Administrator

School Administrators have the duty to respond to the educational needs within their designated school. Building a professional learning community helps to instill the values of the system, encourages knowledge building and aims to address gaps in student learning. "As a professional learning strategy, collaborative inquiry encourages all educators 'to fulfill their potential' in order to be able to help students 'fulfill their potential.'" (Capacity Building Series K-12, 2014)

Supervisory officers and principals are expected to build relationships and structure situations to professionally develop staff. They

themselves must gain the knowledge in promoting individual and team development, positive attitude and commitment to effective teamwork *(CODE Advisory, 2011)*.

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education, is an advisory board that publishes studies on how the Directors of Education across each board can effect change within schools. In *Advisory No. 10*, they make significant contributions to the implementation of collaborative initiatives within schools and the role that Directors play in this. An important role of Directors is to create an effective and sustainable method of leading the system. They do this by building a cohesive and collaborative team through distributing leadership from directors to senior staff, directors to principals and principals to teachers. Directors can create effective, collaborative teams by

- developing and nurturing shared values and principles that are motivated by
- sharing responsibility for student achievement
- ensuring all actions have a direct link to shared values and principles
- accepting and responding to individual views and expertise
- effectively communicating plans and vision
- creating focused staff networks to promote student achievement
- developing non-hierarchical teams to work on program and policy direction
- developing interactive "grassroots" solutions for issues that arise within the system (CODE Advisory, 2011).

Directors of Education initiate effective team building by developing leadership competencies through team building. They work to

> "If leaders begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important, the sharing itself creates a learning culture" *(Adams, 2012).*

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develop and nurture shared values and principles that are adopted by each team member. "Directors lead by example. When directors embrace the collaborative team model, their actions influence school administrators and impact the classroom." (CODE Advisory, 2011) Thus, initiating distributive leadership helps to trickle down the important principles and practices that are necessary for collaboration to take place and ultimately, for there to be a positive impact on student learning.

Administrator/Principal

Individuals in leadership roles can promote structured collaboration in order to "sustain performance excellence". Often, failure to implement strategies is due to unclear expectations and the failure of leaders to check for satisfactory implementation. A leader's role then is to verify work and provide feedback. In collaboration, Benjamin suggests that the leader must ensure that structured collaboration occurs regularly, because it helps to see how well a practice is being implemented. The leader supplies "timely, relevant and accurate feedback". Leaders must also engage in review and candid talk regarding the process. The leader focuses on the goals, strategies and progress made. Structured collaboration requires a leadership role that is there to facilitate the process, define the structure (goals) and provide feedback to those involved (Benjamin, 2011).

The documents, *Implementing a Collaborative Inquiry Model to Personalize and Coordinate Professional Learning for Educators*, and *Too busy to*

Often, failure to implement strategies is due to unclear expectations and the failure of leaders to check for satisfactory implementation.

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> *(Hinton, Walker, 2015)*

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learn? : An Introduction to Collaborative Leadership Learning identify goal setting, regular purposeful meetings problem solving and dialogue as elements that create climates for professional learning. However, trust is the prerequisite for this type of environment. Collaborative inquiry cultures are produced in conditions where leaders value teacher learning, model their own learning, support risk taking, share and create structures that support professional learning. "[T]rust emerges through a process of people working together and the right climate begins to form" *(NCSL, 2003)*

The *Capacity Building Series: Principals as Co-Learners* (Capacity Building Series K-12, 2014) document identifies that leadership in collaborative inquiry is important because it allows administrators to:

- [E]stablish conditions where educators have permission to not know, to be imperfect, and model this through their own actions
- [S]earch out and welcome diverse ideas, opinions and evidence – research, articles, media, classroom data – that shape a "both/and" rather than "either/or thinking
- [U]npack preconceptions, including their own, by making them explicit and transparent.
- [B]uild in regularly scheduled time so collective conversations and learning are an ongoing part of the inquiry.
- [R]ecognize the value of informal, just-in-time, focused learning conversations.

The responsibility of leaders is to "guide needed change in both organizational culture and technology, with attention to individual and collective needs" (Hinton, Walker 2015). The biggest challenge leaders face in "getting employees to work together is cultural and organizational, rather than technological in scope" (Hinton, Walker, 2015). The leader's role is that of facilitator, where "[leaders must work to create this new environment which encourages people within their organization to share aspirations and interests with each other in a variety of new ways" (Hinton, Walker, 2015). They are the ones who bring forth the vision for this change and therefore must assist in moving beyond traditional approaches of the organizational culture and change the language within the organization. Another skill a leader must have is knowing when to get out of the way and to let collaboration occur naturally, because this can lead to further growth and new insights. The leader is a facilitator; one who is focused on inspiring change, interaction and sharing of ideas, but are also focused on retaining structure and working towards a set goal (Hinton, Walker, 2015).

A Possible Framework for Administrators/Principals

In order for effective school leaders to support professional learning communities they must work together to build genuine relationships with teachers and the community that is "guided by a sense of mutual respect [where] [t]he principal affirms and empowers others to work in the best interests of all students." (Leadership Framework, 2008) These types of strong relationships are important as research has shown that they make a difference in student achievement. "There have been outstanding examples in a number of Ontario boards, where team effectiveness and collaboration have made a difference to student achievement." (CODE Advisory, 2011) A strategy to building effective leadership is to be involved with the process of collaborative inquiry and "co learner" with the different members on the team. This experience as a 'co-learner' happens when leaders are able to:

- attend to the learning needs of teachers through an embedded professional development model where learning is laterally shared.
- provide teachers with time, space, resources, encouragement, and professional development activities to support their CI.
- support models of shared decision-making and distributed leadership that promote greater teacher participation in and ownership of CI processes

(Professional Learning Cultures, 2014).

Leaders within our system play an important role in fostering professional learning, as well as being a part of the process; either as co-learners or by helping to develop a system of Collaborative Inquiry. They do this by nurturing relationships that are founded on respect and empowering other teachers to develop an effective professional learning model. Ultimately, this professional learning model aims to support student achievement, "a direct connection from teachers' learning to improved students' learning." *(Professional Learning Cultures, 2014)*

Ontario's Leadership Framework was designed to address the specific needs of schools, as well as system leaders, for example, principals, supervisory officers and directors. It provides a vision of leadership that can be adopted to a variety of system leaders and situations. The framework sets out to create one common language that will enable all leaders to adopt a powerful collaborative approach to leadership as well as professional learning. (Leadership Framework, 2008) The framework intricately lays out the skills, practices and the knowledge needed by different system leaders to develop their roles in areas such

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as accountability, providing direction and leading the instructional program. In particular, the Principal is highlighted as being responsible for creating a collaborative culture, structuring the organization for success and connecting the school to its wider environment.

Principals play a key role in the process of collaborative inquiry and how this takes shape in our schools. There are a number of skills and practices that are necessary for professional learning to take place. As a leader, they need to be accessible and approachable. They are the ones who model integrity and are great exemplars of leaders. They must be aware of their personality and how this impacts the individuals they work with. They are listeners and they do so empathetically and actively. In collaborative inquiry, the principal recognizes the contributions of others, is able to delegate responsibilities and recognizes other leaders and is able to distribute tasks accordingly. (CODE Advisory, 2011). Ultimately, Principals are responsible for the overall function of professional learning environments and extends this to other communities. "The principal...builds a collaborative learning culture within the school and actively engages with other schools to build effective learning communities." (Leadership Framework, 2008) When a Principal fosters commitment to collaborative inquiry, we see greater professional learning and thus, success within our schools.

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat underwent a study to find the impact of Collaborative Inquiry as a professional learning model in Ontario Elementary schools. One of the key findings was that teachers see principals and administrators as playing an integral role in entire process of CI. They found that "what teachers value in their principals and administration [is their]...hands on involvement as a co learner, [their] instructional expertise." (Professional Learning Cultures, 2014) Certainly, Teachers understand the value of having the support of principals within CI projects and the impact that it has on their own learning as well as the professional culture that is built within the school.

The Teacher/ Team Leader

Teacher leaders play a role in collaborative inquiry to ensure that work is relevant to group members as well as to help to build rapport between their colleagues and external facilitators by encouraging productive discussions amongst group members (Professional Learning Cultures, 2014, p.20). Formal leaders distribute leadership and identify those teacher leaders who are in the position to lead in a focus area because of their expertise. Identifying informal leaders who

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The teacher leader's task is to decrease resistance towards collaboration which can be done by educating colleagues on the advantages of collaboration, setting expectations from collaboration, and communicating the purpose of collaboration, encouraging involvement and participation from school leaders.

are open to sharing their practice and have the ability to engage and motivate other staff is important *(Collaborative Inquiry Guide, p.Ii)*.

Teacher leaders must attempt to create a culture of collaboration within their school. Often teacher leaders will have shared leadership and they use their position as a leader to further build a culture of collaboration. There are often barriers preventing collaboration between teachers, often from the nature of the culture itself. There are number of strategies a teacher leader can use to counteract these barriers and help to increase collaboration. They encourage idea, practice and strategy sharing between teachers, building relationships based on trust. The teacher leader's task is to decrease resistance towards collaboration which can be done by educating colleagues on the advantages of collaboration, setting expectations from collaboration, and communicating the purpose of collaboration, encouraging involvement and participation from school leaders. Once a culture of collaboration has taken hold they teacher leader must continuously facilitate and improve collaboration opportunities *(k12teacherleadership, 2016)*.

The Ontario Ministry of Education outlines the principle role in supporting learning communities is to, emphasis that teachers can succeed when they work together, expect teachers to keep knowledge fresh, guide communities towards self direction, make data accessible, teach discussion and decision making skills, show teacher research, take time to build trust. (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014).

Leadership in General

Throughout the paper we discuss the different strategies of a good leader in pursuing collaborative learning, but it is also just as important to mention what a good leader does. Clear communication, continual growth, trust, and authentic conversations are qualities a leader must have in order to create successful school communities that are open to the process of collaboration and inquiry.

Characteristics of Strong Leaders: Drawing on Personal Resources: According to the Ontario Leadership Framework leaders can help to create collaborative inquiry by drawing on "personal resources" or characteristics that all leaders have. (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014) This is particularly pertinent to teacher leaders, team leaders and principals concerned with what skills they could work on to improve their skills. According to the document leaders can draw on skills such as:

- **Cognitive Resources:** problem-solving expertise, knowledge of effective school and classroom conditions with direct effects on students learning, systems thinking
- **Social Resources:** perceiving emotions, managing emotions, acting in emotionally appropriate ways
- **Psychological Resources:** optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity.

Communication: Individuals in leadership roles can promote structured collaboration in order to "sustain performance excellence". Often, failure to implement strategies is due to unclear expectations and the failure of leaders to check for satisfactory implementation. A leader's role then is to verify work and provide feedback. In collaboration, Benjamin suggests that the leader must ensure that structured collaboration occurs regularly, because it helps to see how well a practice is being implemented. The leader supplies, "timely, relevant and accurate feedback." Leaders must also engage in review and candid talk regarding the process. The leader focuses on the goals, strategies and progress made. Structured collaboration requires a leadership role that is there to facilitate the process, define the structure (goals) and provide feedback to those involved (Benjamin, 2011).

Continuing to Grow: The notion behind a leader as learner is to "invite administrators to reflect on their learning stance and mindset, to pursue their own inquiries and consider ways in which they might engage in collaborative inquiry as co-learners with teachers and students in their schools". When principals participate as learners they improve the learning community (Katz, 2015). The idea of we're all in this together is the driving force behind creating a culture where educators are supported in their collaborative inquiry efforts. Marian Small argues that "schools won't change until principals are truly instructional leaders" (2015). Leadership plays a definitive role in promoting a culture of collaborative inquiry.

Developing Trust: Leaders help to build trust by acknowledging the interdependence of the members of the school. Trust is important in building school culture. A leader in a school does this by following through of school expectations, demonstrating integrity by walking the talk and by putting student needs first (Ontario Board of Education, 2013- 2014). Leaders in all different capacities can help to develop trust. Principals can help create a culture of trust by being honest with teachers and giving them understanding of what the expectations and

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purpose behind collaborative inquiries. Teachers and team leaders who are in charge of ensuring the success of collaborative inquiries can build trust by showing integrity by ensuring that all the teachers are there to build putting students needs first and remind teachers that they are working towards helping others.

Having Authentic Conversations: When discussing collaborative inquiry having authentic Conversations is important to the learning process. In an article produced by the Ministry of Education to support leadership and instructional effectiveness in Ontario titled "An intentional Interruption Strategy for Enhanced Collaborative learning," authors Steven Katz and Lisa Ain Dack discuss the importance of have authentic conversations is crucial to the success of collaborative learning. They argue that successful collaborative groups often work better when the discussions have been planned and systematic (Katz and Dack, 2016). In their monograph they introduce a 7 steps of learning convention protocol. Here is brief outline of their 7 step protocol:

1. **Introduction:** Reviewing the why being the steps, explain the process of the leadership inquiry. Explaining what has been learned and what moves were undertaken.
2. **Clarifying the Leader's Work:** Reviewing the why, asking clarification questions.
3. **Interpreting the Leaders Work:** reviewing why behind the steps the group tries to understand the leadership inquiry and each individual puts forward how they understand what they heard.
4. **Quick Clarification:** group asks for question or clarification and any inaccuracies or missing information is presented.
5. **Implications for Thinking**
6. **Consolidate Thinking and Plan Next Steps**
7. **Reflections on the Process:** Reflecting on the process and what has been learned from the collaborative analysis. (Katz and Dack, 2016)

Although the paper is intended for inquiry made by leaders, the process can be easily used by educational leaders in collaborative inquiry situations to ensure authentic conversation and discussions occur when participating in collaborative inquiries. What becomes clear in their 7 steps is the need for a well planned discussion in order to really support and enhance collaborative learning.

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Challenges that leaders still face in schools:

Despite the importance of strong leadership there are still barriers to maintaining an effective system for collaborative inquiry to take place. For example, schools experience constant changes in administration and leadership roles, which greatly impacts the professional learning culture and weakens the platform in which collaborative inquiry can take place. (CODE Advisory, 2011) Secondly, a potential barrier to collaborative inquiry is the lack of commitment from all teachers. The involvement of all teachers in a school's collaborative process is critical to the professional learning process. When there is not initial involvement in the process, there is a higher chance that educators will adopt the system. "It is essential to involve educators in developing system direction and vision... when individuals are not involved at the beginning of an initiative they rarely develop the necessary level of commitment and ownership." (CODE Advisory, 2011)

Similarly, in *Professional Learning Cultures*, Bolden et al. 2014 identify some challenges leaders face in having teachers adopt CI projects. "One of the challenges of externally implemented initiatives is the potential for the initiative to be viewed as a single event or new "bandwagon.""(Professional Learning Cultures, 2014) This is a compelling argument because CI Initiatives must come from those in which it serves and this makes it authentic, responsive and real. When these initiatives are mandatory or forced, it comes off as irrelevant and is likely to be resisted.

The Roles of Teachers, Schools, School Authorities, and Government Vis à Vis Educators' Professional Learning

Moving forward into collaborative inquiry, even though the roles differ, they should be interconnected and aligned (Adams, 2009). How can teachers achieve this and what can teachers do to achieve their professional learning responsibilities? Adams highlights growth plans and more opportunities for professional dialogue between: teacher to teacher and teacher to administration. Also, it can be challenging to find the time to pursue individual/group professional inquiry/research and perhaps a solution to this is to have embedded planning time in the term schedule that is approved by administration. Self-reflection time (reflective practice) would also be a positive feature of carving out time to reflect on one's teaching tools (Adams, 2009).

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Opportunities/Solutions

In Professional Learning Cultures, 2014, an in-depth study on collaborative initiatives in Ontario Elementary schools, a number of key findings were revealed which help us understand the role of leadership. Based on the findings by Bolden et al. 2014, and in an effort to refine collaborative inquiry initiatives, we have adopted a number of opportunities that we feel can be implemented.

- Demonstrate an ongoing commitment to collaborative methods of professional learning as a permanent, system-wide expectation for professional learning to ensure the confidence and ongoing participation of educators.This requires educators and leaders to adopt a long-term shift in mindset of professional learning.
- Continue to define and refine the evolving roles of participants and stakeholders within CI initiatives. We must continue to recognize that we are emerging experts whose roles are evolving as participants and stakeholders of collaborative inquiry.
- Continue to create safe and trusting environments for open discussions among those participating in CI initiatives. Any tensions or concerns should be made transparent to the team as this helps us understand others' perspectives, and can provide a potential source for professional learning across the system.
- Continue to make research accessible to support teachers' CI learning and subsequent instructional practices. Teachers should make an effort to incorporate meaningful research to build on their knowledge as it informs their learning and their practice. CI is the vehicle in which teachers can critically review research as it relates to their teaching.
- Establish structures and strategies to share educators' learning from CI projects. It is important to document and communicate the impacts of such CI initiatives. Educators can display their new knowledge by creating artifacts such as monographs, executive summaries.
- Create mechanisms to identify and communicate CI impacts on student learning outcomes. The most important and sometimes challenging, part of CI initiatives is the evidence of the impact on student learning. Here we must determine the possible educational outcomes for students and how this is represented. As well, determine how we assess these outcomes based on existing instructional practices.
- Provide sufficient time and resources to further implement CI initiatives that will help to engage those educators who are not

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currently aware of CI initiatives or have not yet shown a propensity to engage in CI. Here, leaders understand that in order for there to be deeper implementation, we must bring in all educators, even those are not engaged or who may be resistant to change. Providing enough resources and supports to garner all types or professional learning needs can assist in spreading CI initiatives system-wide. (Professional Learning Cultures, 2014)

Strategies that serve to strengthen teacher participation

- Professional learning days
- Common preparation time
- Conferences
- Inquiry Projects
- Colleague/principal reviews
- Masters/doctoral studies (PME!)
- Intentional mentorship
- Follow through on initiatives
- Engagement with broader research community
- Time/resources to meaningfully explore (Adams, 2009)

Essentially, collaborative inquiry requires an ongoing commitment to one's profession and to continually choose to be a life-long learner which will assist in the collaborative process. Moving forward, collaborative inquiry could begin with two teachers who share a common ground to make positive change in their school.

Our Collaborative Inquiry Journey

Our collaborative inquiry journey has brought together five professionals with different educational backgrounds, four different time zones and three different countries to solve an inquiry problem. As we embarked on our journey a little over four weeks ago, we quickly came to realize that we would face many challenges along the way; the primary one being the time differences and the difficulties coordinating meetings. Ultimately, the direction for our project came from a brainstorming session that led us to narrow our focus on *Leadership in Collaborative Inquiry*. While we all recognized the importance and the benefits of collaborative inquiry we wanted to gain an understanding of how collaborative inquiry can be cultivated in our professional practice and how a leader can nurture this culture. Our shared research and new insights into leader types, behaviours, conditions and factors that promote collaborative inquiry, allowed us to be leave it more

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productive and gave us confidence in our own inquiry.

The document *An intentional Interruption Strategy for Enhanced Collaborative Learning* by authors Steven Katz and Lisa Ain Dack outline seven steps for authentic conversations. This article inspired our group to communicate via email and Google Hangouts, collaborate with shared Google folders and working documents, and organize our meetings with planned agendas; all of which resulted in productive meetings and working days. The use of these digital tools supported us in our collaborative inquiry journey.

Working on a group project with members scattered all over the world over the span of four weeks, while also balancing our professional and personal lives proved to be quite demanding. However, the levels of professionalism, dedication and understanding demonstrated by all group individuals have helped us to successfully address our problem/dilemma. Additionally, we have learned how to be leaders that promote collaborative inquiry within our own professional practices.

John Hendrickse, Grade 3 Teacher, ESL Specialist, Hong Kong

Collaborative Inquiry does not exist at my school. However, by gaining expertise in this course, through acquiring the skills and understanding by completing this activity and through interaction with a Professional Learning Community at my school, I have now begun that process with my Grade 3 team. This paper has made me not only realise my own role as a teacher leader in my own group is, but also the barriers and problems that I will face when I implement it.

My favourite part of this paper was the discussion that our group had on the word 'trust'. In the paper we discuss trust as a key part of a leadership's responsibility and sometimes under valued. Building trust is important in all three levels of leadership that we describe in leadership. Trust I have learned involves much more than being honest, it involves open communication, being reliable, showing integrity and being committed to putting students first. As I move on in building my own collaborative inquiry community in my own school, I will make sure that at the heart of the process.

Angela Contrada, High School Teacher, Calgary

In my professional practice, I have found the most effective forms of collaborative inquiry has been through PLC projects coordinated by our school board's Instructional Services (IS) consultants. As an English Language Arts teacher, I have been fortunate to work on three PLC

projects in two years, all focusing on Success for All Students. The opening idea of our paper, that collaborative learning environments are known to show substantial improvement in students' learning is the driving force behind these projects. The IS consultants have been the leaders in these ventures by providing us with three PD days for us to meet during the school year, and then continue our work online (via Google Docs) throughout the school year. We discuss best practice strategies, share ideas and problem solve. There is a mutual respect in this group where all members trust that at the core of their beliefs and decisions is what is best for all students

In the school I work at, we do not have formal collaborative inquiry groups, however we do have dedicated teachers throughout the building that meet regularly to improve their practice. These groups are usually headed by department coordinating teachers, and focus on subject specific ideas like assessment and personalized learning. However, there are two "lunch and learn" groups that meet more informally to focus on teaching and learning outside the specific subject area curriculum. These individuals pay more attention to incorporating technology and innovation in their practice. As there is a wide range of subject area knowledge and varying levels of expertise, the leaders in these groups tend to be teachers that have more knowledge with technology and innovation, but are still growing and learning; they are co-learners. These groups are very well received because the culture of trust, collaboration, and ongoing communication they have established. There have been instances where teachers in these groups do not always agree on certain points, and at times, conversations get heated, but it is because we all want what is best for our students.

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Katherine Heikkila, Adult Literacy ESL Instructor, Kingston, ON

Collaborative Inquiry varies among the schools I have worked for. At the university level, collaborative inquiry is detailed through the Director of the Department and executed through the Program Coordinator and colleagues. This is the best process I have experienced in teaching ESL. Each program begins with the teachers and coordinator with the syllabus, curriculum and expectations, including health and safety in the school. Throughout the course, the coordinator plans mid-term meetings, follow-up with absent students and a comprehensive schedule for marking, assessment rubrics, and deadlines. It is a very proactive, collaborative model that creates a very positive teaching experience.

At the school board level, collaborative inquiry is a balance between administration, ie. our Principal and coordinator, union, Human Resources and Instructors. It is a navigation between parties and often there is a compromise. At the end of the day, advocating for student needs and/or including our latest refugees and newcomer Canadians and seeing their progress is a way to stay passionate about teaching at the Literacy level.

It would be interesting to create a collaborative inquiry session in our department or raise it in a meeting that is bipartisan. Occasionally, there is tension when meetings are rushed on lunch hours or on a PD Day when planning time is needed. It would be great to identify a leader as a neutral party among colleagues who would be able to listen to instructor needs when it comes to assessment, curriculum, program development and student needs.

Robert Bertschi, Multimedia Design Specialist, Kingston, ON

Collaboration is a key aspect of my current role, I work as part of a online & blended course design team at Queen's University, and all our projects follow a collaborative model. Leadership in our collaboration takes many forms. First our team is overseen by a manager, who leads in our daily tasks. Each project we work on has a Project Lead, a role that is filled by an instructional designer. Their role is to manage both the course authors and multimedia team. The project lead is integral to keep the project on time and on task, through regular meetings. Their role entails keeping detailed records of contact, planning agendas for scheduled meetings and guiding the team through the entire process. I believe this shows how critical leadership can be in collaboration. The project lead sets the tone for the collaboration and keeps tasks moving steadily ahead.

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While researching leadership in collaboration, I have come to understand how crucial a leader is to collaboration. There are 3 of us in similar multimedia roles, and we work together often, to share strategies and ideas for multimedia between the many projects we work on. These "meetings" often do not go quite as planned and with no leader it often does not lead to any positive outcome or changes. Without someone taking a lead in these types of meetings I feel like a lot is not accomplished. From our research in this project and how collaboration works in my professional practice I feel leadership is integral to collaboration that requires definitive results.

Halgan Ahmed, Year 6 PYP Teacher, United Arab Emirates

I teach within the IB curriculum and specifically the Primary Years Programme. One important aspect of the program that is embedded in each unit is Taking Action. It is the final component of the unit and is where students can put into action what they have learned. This project was exactly that-me taking action. Learning about collaborative inquiry has transformed the way that I see my work as an educator significantly.

For me, the topic 'Leadership in Collaborative Inquiry' actually resonated because I am also taking PME 803 (Organizational Leadership)-so this topic, fused the two together. I was able to consolidate my learning in both courses throughout this project. As well, I have a greater understanding of the importance of CI within education and how this impacts student learning.

This project in particular was unique because we have individuals with different viewpoints who must decide on one particular issue and incorporate our own (as well as our teams) knowledge and skills to find solutions. I have to admit at first I could not see the vision and what we were exactly attempting to solve. However, I jumped on board, began my research and review. And it was not until the work was coming together, and our discussion during meetings; that this really came together for me. I think we were all willing to see this project come together and even through the uncertain times, we all had the same end goal. As a teacher, I know the value of having students work in groups to inquire and share ideas. If I had done this same issue but on my own, I don't believe that I would've learned as much. Everyone's perspectives on certain issues largely shaped my understanding of leadership in CI and ultimately, what I will take away from this course.

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Through examining the importance of leadership and how this shapes the collaborative inquiry process, we as a collective realised the importance for supervisory leaders to be open, communicative and aware of the culture shift that might occur when implementing this process.

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Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have discussed collaborative inquiry, professional learning communities and the importance of leadership in ensuring that this process is successful for teachers. Our goal was to address the why and the how of leadership and provide our peers with practical strategies to take on leadership opportunities in their schools, districts and communities. Leaders, in any form, have the power to influence and create a strong culture of collaboration and learning. Through examining the importance of leadership and how this shapes the collaborative inquiry process, we as a collective realised the importance for supervisory leaders to be open, communicative and aware of the culture shift that might occur when implementing this process. Principals need to remember that they are key in not only putting in place support systems, but also create strong and trusting relationships with teachers. They are responsible for fostering a professional learning culture within their school as well as with other schools. Team leaders or teacher leaders must be empowered to make change and courageous enough to have authentic conversations with peers and ensure the stability of collaborative. As well, they must ensure that collaborative initiatives are relevant to their peers and will foster significant outcomes for teachers. Ultimately, the goal of collaborative inquiry is to develop a professional learning community in which teachers can openly share their experiences, challenges and develop a system that ensures best practices. We hope and encourage our peers to continue to explore how they can be leaders and share their learning with others.

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